

Appendix A

Research Design Subcommittee Statement and ABG Physical Anthropological Peer Review Panel Report

RESEARCH DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE

Members: Charlene Dwinn-Vaughn, Dr. Jerome Handler, Joan Maynard, Robert McDonald, Noel Pointer

STATEMENT:

"The African Burial Ground is of unparalleled significance to America's heritage. The investigation of this site involves the excavation and study of 390 ancestral remains, primarily of Africans who died while in bondage during the eighteenth century. It is one of the most important archeological sites in this country today in that it is the earliest large skeletal population ever to be examined through careful scientific excavation. The ancestral remains that have been excavated and those remaining in the ground are also of great spiritual and inspirational significance to the African American community. (Note: throughout this document the term "African American" is used in reference to post-colonial communities of African descent. Historic communities are referred to as "African", "Irish", etc., as appropriate in reference to both first generation and eighteenth-century communities prior to the nation's establishment.

Due to the circumstances that have brought about their presence, these material remains of African ancestors present themselves during a time of social and emotional strife when inspirational uplift is most needed in the African-American community; during a time when evidence of the significance of racism in America needs desperately to be brought to bear on the minds of Euro-Americans; and during a time when there is a thirst for knowledge about African heritage that has propelled heated debates about inadequacies of American education. These African ancestral remains have presented both a challenge and an opportunity to simultaneously address these issues.

This Research Design also recognizes the necessity of ongoing consultation with religious leaders who will work with scientists and others to see to the sacred aspects of this important project. Periodic religious ceremonies are anticipated throughout the project. Ultimately, an appropriately dignified reburial should take place at a site designated by the descendant community and the city of New York. In addition, plans for a memorial and world-class museum should be realized. The wealth of information that these African ancestors provide deserves nothing less as a platform from which through science, they may speak to us about the place that they came from, the physical evidence of their struggles in this "New World," and the culture they clung to and created here. It is fervently hoped that the implementation of this Research Design will bring this important spiritual, cultural, and scientific resource into the prominence that it deserves.

Research Design SubCommittee

June 14, 1993

African Burial Ground Committee Meeting May 24, 1993

Proposed Resolution.

The Subcommittee on Research Design recommends as a motion to the Steering Committee the following:

That the Steering Committee accept the Research Design submitted to GSA on April 22, 1993.

That the Steering Committee agree that this is a bona fide scholarly and scientific document which offer a professionally competent plan for the study and analysis of the skeletal remains and related archeological and historical issues.

The Steering Committee has confidence in the professional abilities of Dr. Blakely, as Director of the project will have full authority to resolve issues related to the scientific methodologies, analytical procedures, and similar issues related to the overall research design.

The resolution was accepted.